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The
Dublin Grand Opera Society

1941



STORIES OF THE OPERAS

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"FAUST"

(GOUNOD)

FOUNDED on the first part of Goethe's great drama, "Faust" is a dramatic and fine opera. It opens in the study of the old philosopher, Faust, who, though he has devoted his life to study, is miserable because his advancing age prevents him from still further delving into the secrets of existence. He summons Satan to his aid and the latter appears in the form of a cavalier, Mephistopheles. Mephistopheles promises to give youth and beauty to Faust if he will, in return, give him his soul. Faust agrees and the bargain is struck.

Then Mephistopheles shows Faust a vision of the lovely Marguerite, with whom Faust immediately falls in love. He sees Marguerite in the flesh at the village festivities before the soldiers leave for war. But she is jealously guarded by her brother Valentine, who leaves her protected by Martha, her old aunt, when he goes off to war.

It is an easy thing for Mephistopheles to wheedle the old gossip into letting Faust meet Marguerite, who has already been half won by glorious gifts of jewellery which have easily overshadowed the flower gifts of her other lover, Siebel.

The love of Faust and Marguerite blossoms into delightful fulfilment, but their awakening arrives with the return of Valentine from war. The enraged brother hastens to find his sister's betrayer and challenges him to a duel. Faust, however, is unwilling to fight Marguerite's brother, but Mephistopheles directs his sword and Valentine is killed. He dies cursing Marguerite.

This turn of events is too much for the simple country maid, and finding herself shunned by the villagers, her mind becomes unhinged, and she drowns her new-born babe. Thereupon she is imprisoned and sentenced to death.

Faust, having lost his Marguerite, pines for her, and Mephistopheles does his best to distract his attention by showing him many new joys but in the midst of each the face of Marguerite returns to Faust. At last, in desperation, he begs Mephistopheles to take him into Marguerite's prison cell. They go to the prison, but Marguerite sensing the presence of Satan, shrinks from her lover and implores the Saints' pardon for her sin. Her prayer is granted and she is allowed to die in the cell just as the time for her execution comes. The opera ends with the soul of Marguerite being borne away to heaven, and Faust, unwillingly, being dragged into the underworld by the triumphant Mephistopheles.

“LA TRAVIATA”

(VERDI)

THIS lovely opera is based on the story of Alexandre Dumas Fils “La Dame Aux Camelias.” It opens with a party given by Violetta, in her Paris Salon. Violetta is a very lovely courtesan who is the toast of Paris but who is at the same time a very ill woman. Among the guests at the party is Alfred Germont, who is madly in love with Violetta. He tries his hardest to make her give up her life in Paris and come with him into the country. Having never met a passion as sincere as that of Alfred's she eventually decides to go with him, and the second act finds them established in rural happiness just outside Paris.

There they live in great content until Alfred learns that Violetta is about to sell her city house and her carriage in order to defray expenses, so he departs for Paris to prevent this. While he is away his father visits Violetta to try and persuade her to leave Alfred. He explains to her that she has destroyed the happiness of Alfred's family and what is worse she will ruin all chances of Alfred ever having a career. Because she loves Alfred dearly Violetta decides to give him up and leaves him secretly.

The bitter Alfred can find no possible reason for her desertion of him beyond that of faithlessness and searches throughout Paris for her. He eventually traces her to the house of a friend where Violetta feeling that she has not much longer to live has sought refuge. He comes to a party at the friend's house and publicly insults her there. The cudgels on Violetta's behalf are taken up by her present protector and he challenges Alfred to a duel.

In the last act we find that Violetta has been declining rapidly since that fatal evening when Alfred found her again in Paris. She hears, however, that Alfred was victorious in the duel and a last ray of hope for happiness is offered in a letter from Alfred's father, consenting to allow them to marry and forgive her. Alfred has by this time heard of Violetta's sacrifice and he hurries to her side only to find that even the joy of having him back cannot restore her health. So forgiven and forgiving Violetta dies in his arms and in her last moments of happiness she strives to console her desolate lover with promises that she will always live in his heart.



“CARMEN”

(BIZET)

CARMEN is a wanton Spanish Gipsy, whose colourful character combines extreme passion with butterfly fickleness. Though only a worker in a cigarette factory, her dazzling attraction casts a spell over every man who sees her.

Bizet's opera opens in a square in Seville, where the cigarette factory is placed directly opposite the guard-house. At noon-tide the cigarette girls come out for a break, followed by the alluring Carmen. She then sings the famous “Habanera” deliberately trying to provoke the attention of Don Jose, Captain of the Guard. For the time being, however, he is indifferent to her irresistible wiles. The girls return to the factory, and while Jose is receiving a letter from Micaela, the girl he originally loves, there is a disturbance within caused by Carmen, who has attempted to kill one of her fellow-workers. She is arrested by Jose's superior officer, Zuniga, and left in charge of the former. Left alone with the voluptuous beauty, Jose is no proof against her charm, and helps her to escape, making an assignation with her at the inn of Lillas Pastias.

In the second act Carmen joins in the revelry of the soldiers, toreadors and smugglers who frequent the inn. While awaiting the arrival of her latest conquest, Don Jose, she exercises her spell over Escamillo, a popular

toreador. It is then that he sings the famous Toreador song to his fellow-revellers and departs with Zuniga. On Don Jose's arrival, Carmen hints that he should abandon his duty and join her with the smugglers. While infatuated by her fascination, he hesitates to follow her, proclaiming, nevertheless his undying love. While so doing, Zuniga, who has also fallen in love with Carmen, returns and orders Don Jose back to the Barracks, but Jose refuses. Encouraged by Jose's defiance the gipsies disarm Zuniga, and they all proceed to the smugglers' cave.

At the smugglers' cave in the mountains we find that Carmen is tiring of Don Jose. While they are fortune-telling, Carmen reads that death is ordained for her first and Don Jose next, and in the facts of inexorable destiny she laughs. Don Jose is left in charge of the cave while the smugglers attempt to cross the frontier. While they are away Escamillo returns for Carmen and is involved in a desperate struggle with Don Jose. They are only separated by the return of the smugglers. Despite the fact that he has almost been worsted in the fray the toreador invites the smugglers to his bull-fight and then departs singing of his love for Carmen, who is attracted into following him, but her way is barred by the unfortunate Don Jose. While with dagger drawn he is threatening Carmen, Micaela, his erstwhile love comes to tell him that he must return to his mother who is dying of grief at his disgrace. For a short time filial duty overcomes his passion for Carmen, and he goes off with Micaela. As the curtain falls the glorious notes of the Toreador song are heard far away in the hills.

In the final act the scene is the entrance to the bull-ring of Seville. An excited crowd mixes in picturesque confusion on the stage, singing the praises of the adored Escamillo. Carmen and Don Jose are among the crowd and Escamillo sees her. He vows his love for her and she promises herself to him if he should be victorious in the bull-ring. Don Jose, maddened with jealousy, will not allow her in to watch the bull-fight and threatens to kill her if she should give herself to Escamillo. Carmen laughs at his persistence and taunts him obviously preferring death to his ardour. As shouts of triumph rise from the ring, acclaiming yet another victory for Escamillo, Don Jose, blinded with fury, stabs her.

The opera closes with Don Jose clasping the lifeless Carmen in his arms and crying to her: "Ah! Carmen, loved Carmen, no more shalt thou wake, but I love thee still."



"CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA"

(MASCAGNI)

TURRIDU, a young Sicilian peasant, loved the flighty Lola before he went to war, but during his absence she married the wealthy carrier Alfio, who adores her. When Turridu returns he consoles himself with Santuzza, but it does not take much encouraging from Lola before he is once again flirting with her, despite the fact that she is now a married woman.

The opera opens at the point when Turridu is serenading Lola. Santuzza overhears him and, mad with jealousy, confides in Lucia, Turridu's mother. Santuzza meets Turridu outside the church and reproaches him, but he departs laughingly to meet Lola. Then, unable to bear his faithlessness any longer, Santuzza tells Alfio of Lola's inconstancy and he determines to challenge Turridu.

After church the two men meet in Lucia's tavern and when Alfio refuses to drink with Turridu and then challenges him Sicilian fashion, the latter realises the fatal mistake he has made. The two men then repair to a nearby orchard and having commended the luckless Santuzza to his mother's care, Turridu goes out to his death and the curtain closes on the tragedy.

“IL TROVATORE”

(VERDI)

THE Count Di Luna had a brother who was carried off by the gipsy Azucena, whose mother was burnt at the stake by his father. The Opera opens with the telling of this story by one of the Count's vassals.

The Count is in love with the beautiful Leonora, but she has given her heart to Manrico, a gipsy whose lovely songs and deeds of valour have won her. One night Manrico serenades Leonora and she hastens to him only to mistake the Count for her Gipsy lover. But Manrico comes up in time to save her and the two men fight, Manrico being wounded. However, when he has the Count at his mercy some strange impulse allows him to let his adversary go.

In the second act, the gipsy's camp, Azucena tells Manrico of how she stole the old Count's son and then killed her own child by mistake and had to rear the Count's son as her own. Manrico is so horrified by this story and the realisation that he is not really Azucena's son that she hastily retracts her words and pretends that the story is not true.

Meanwhile he hears that Leonora, who believes him to have been killed is about to enter a convent and he goes to save her. The Count bent on the same object arrives at the convent just before Manrico but the latter rescues Leonora and the Count vows vengeance.

Leonora and Manrico are then married but their happiness is short lived for, in the third act, Manrico hears that Azucena has been captured by the Count and is to be burned. He tries to save her but is captured too. Then, in order to save him, Leonora offers herself to the Count in exchange for the lives of Azucena and Manrico, but she hopes to forestall the Count by taking a slow-working poison.

Then, assured of her lover's freedom, she hastens to tell him of his deliverance and dies at his feet. The Count enters and seeing that he has been deceived orders Manrico to be executed immediately. He is led away and to the Count's horror, just as Manrico is killed, Azucena shrieks out, "he is your own brother" and this final tragedy closes the Opera.



“LA TOSCA”

Opera in 3 acts by Puccini (1858-1924).

Libretto by Illica and Giacosa, based on Sardun's drama.

First produced, Teatr'o Costanzi, Rome, January 14, 1900.

Time: 1800. Place: Rome.

FLORIA Tosca, singer, and Mario Cavaradossi, painter, love each other. For having helped a political fugitive, Angelotti, Mario falls into the clutches of Baron Scarpia, Chief of Police, who also aspires to Tosca. Tosca, to save Mario from further torture, reveals Angelotti's hiding-place. News is brought of Bonaparte's victory at Marengo, a defeat for Scarpia. Mario exults. Scarpia orders his execution. Mario gone, Tosca pretends to yield to Scarpia, who arranges a pretended mock execution. Tosca wins from Scarpia a safe-conduct for Mario and herself. As Scarpia hands her the paper she stabs him fatally and leaves for Castel Sant' Angelo, where Mario awaits death. Tosca

is admitted and instructs Mario how to act during the "mock" execution. But Scarpia has been doubly astute. He had hoped to enjoy Tosca and have his revenge on Mario. He achieves the latter, for the bullets are real. Tosca vainly calls on Mario to rise from a death which she thinks feigned. The murder of Scarpia has been discovered. His agents approach to arrest Tosca. She jumps to death from the castle parapet crying: "Scarpia, we shall meet on high!"



"I PAGLIACCI"

(LEONCAVALLO)

IN the Prologue to "I Pagliacci," Tonio, the clown, comes before the curtain to remind the audience that often there is deep tragedy behind a farce, and thus they are prepared for the sad end of the lovers in this opera.

Canio is the head of a troupe of wandering actors who come to a small village in Italy where they are rapturously welcomed by the villagers. Having invited the peasants to his play that night Canio retires to the inn to have some wine. While he is away Tonio makes advances to Nedda, the sprightly, coquettish wife of Canio, but she spurns him even to the extent of striking him across the face with a whip. Humiliated beyond endurance the clown swears to have revenge. Nedda then meets Silvio, her lover, with whom she has made plans to run away. Tonio overhears them making their plans and hastens to Canio to tell him of his wife's faithlessness. Canio, who is a morose, jealous man, wishes to seek out the man who has betrayed him immediately, but is restrained by Beppo, the Harlequin.

In the second act the players are prepared to present their play. Villagers collect before the tiny stage, and when the curtain opens Nedda is seen on the stage and the play within the play begins. But with the entrance of Canio as Punchinello, the pretty farce takes on a new note. Forgetting that they are acting before the astonished gaze of the villagers Canio roughly demands the name of her lover from Nedda. But knowing that Silvio is in the audience Nedda carries on with her lines as if nothing untoward has occurred.

Eventually the infuriated Canio stabs Nedda and as she tries to avoid him she inadvertently calls to Silvio for help. The latter leaps on to the stage only to meet the same fate as the hapless Nedda. Meanwhile the audience have been so bewildered by the sudden change from make-believe to realism that they have not been able to help, and so with a final grim gesture of despair Canio wearily dismisses them saying "Go, the comedy is ended," and then they leave him with the body of his dead wife he loved too well.



"MADAME BUTTERFLY"

(PUCCINI)

BUTTERFLY is a little geisha who is loved by Lieutenant Pinkerton of the American Navy. She returns his love and they decide to get married. But Sharpless, the American Consul at Nagasaki, realises the earnestness of Butterfly's affections, as she is going to renounce her religion, and marry Pinkerton as a Christian. He warns Pinkerton against betraying the trust of the simple and charming little Japanese girl, but Pinkerton loves her

too dearly to think of the future. After their marriage ceremony an unhappy jarring note is struck by the arrival of Butterfly's uncle, the Bonze or Japanese priest, who denounces her for the abandonment of her faith. But even though the Bonze persuades all the geisha's friends to leave her in horror, she is comforted by her handsome lieutenant.

The second act is supposed to be three years later. Pinkerton has been recalled to America, but Butterfly is secure in the knowledge that he has promised to return when "the robins nest." She awaits him patiently, but not so her maid, Suzuki, who does not believe in Pinkerton's constancy. Butterfly has even refused the hand of Prince Yamadori, because she is a Christian wife who must await her husband. Sharpless, the Consul, who has been watching her with sympathy and compassion, tries to persuade her to marry the Prince, because a letter has arrived from Pinkerton telling of his marriage to an American girl. Butterfly does not comprehend his news, however, because she is so overjoyed at the sight of a letter from her adored husband. Her faith and pride are so great that she even attempts to stab the marriage broker, Goro, who spreads the report that the father of her son is not known. But she spurns him, knowing that soon Pinkerton will appear and disprove of the calumny.

Soon cannon shots are heard in the bay, and Butterfly discovered that it is Pinkerton's ship returned at last. She and Suzuki happily spread flowers all over the house in honour of his home-coming, and then they await with her small son behind a partition in which they have made holes that they can keep a watch on the hill. They wait until nightfall, but still he does not come. The maid and the child fall asleep, leaving Butterfly a solitary pathetic figure standing at the partition waiting alone.

The curtain rises on the last Act, and Butterfly is still watching. Suzuki wakes, and seeing that it is already morning she begs her mistress to try and get a little sleep. So, taking her child in her arms, Butterfly wearily retires. She has barely gone than Pinkerton and his wife and Sharpless appear; they have come to persuade Butterfly to give up her child to the care of Mrs. Pinkerton. Pinkerton has by now realised Butterfly's great faith in him and goes, for he cannot bear the thought of her unhappiness. Then Butterfly enters, hoping to find him, but is informed instead that the strange lady waiting there is Pinkerton's wife, who wishes to take the child from her. With quite dignity Butterfly says that Pinkerton must return himself in half-an-hour's time and the boy will be ready. Pinkerton does so, only to find that while his son awaits him in the garden, his once-beloved little geisha has killed herself and lies dead in the flower strewn room, while next to her lies her father's sword bearing the inscription: "He dies in honour who no longer lives in honour."



“ RIGOLETTO ”

(VERDI)

THE Duke of Mantua is a wild and debauched youth, who is assisted in his dissipated life by Rigoletto, his jester. In the first act, Rigoletto is found helping the Duke to win the wife of the Count Ceprano, but her father, Count Monterone, appears in the midst of a feast and curses both Rigoletto and the Duke.

Rigoletto has one vulnerable point in his armour and that is his tender love for his beautiful and pure daughter Gilda. Unknown to Rigoletto, the Duke has been serenading Gilda, and has won her confidence. One night as Rigoletto goes home he finds some of the Duke's men abducting a young

woman. Thinking that it is the Countess Ceprano, he gleefully assists them only to find that it is his own daughter.

Gilda is taken to the Duke's palace, where Rigoletto follows her, but she implores him not to take vengeance on the Duke, whom she loves. Rigoletto is not to be put off, and hires one Sparafucile to kill the Duke.

In the last act we find Sparafucile's sister, Maddalena, succumbing to the advances of the Duke, and she begs her brother not to kill him. He consents, and they decide to kill the next passer-by instead, and pretend that it is the Duke's body. Rigoletto has persuaded Gilda to fly from the palace disguised as a man, and she is the next passer-by and is killed. Her body is then placed in a sack and handed to the jester as being that of the Duke. As Rigoletto proceeds to the river to dispose of the body he hears the Duke singing, and realises that a mistake has been made. He hastily tears open the sack to find his dying daughter inside, and with a last frenzied cry remembers that Monterone's awful curse has been fulfilled.



“SAMSON AND DELILAH”

(SAINT-SAENS)

IN the city of Gaza, in Palestine, Samson tries hard to encourage the disheartened Hebrews. A first step towards this is the quelling of a band of Philistines and the killing of their Satrap, Abimilech. The Philistine High Priest discovers the dead body of Abimelech and determines to avenge it.

But mighty Samson is not to be taken by force, so the priest devises a more subtle mode of attack. He takes the lovely and unscrupulous Delilah into his confidence and she exerts her charms upon Samson who, despite the warning of the Hebrews, is fascinated by her beauty and grace.

Delilah and the High Priest are then found in the Second Act in the Valley of Soreck, conspiring to capture Samson who will, they are sure, eventually succumb to the allure of Delilah. They are right in the judgment of Samson, for he does yield to the enchantress and is persuaded to tell her that the secret of his strength lies in his hair. Thereupon she soothes him to sleep and while he sleeps has his hair shaved off and his eyes burned out. Thus Samson is made the captive of the Philistines.

The Third Act finds him in the prison, where he is subjected to the reproaches of the Hebrews, and he begs that punishment for his weakness fall on his own head and not upon his unfortunate race.

In the last Act, Samson is brought into the temple of Dagon to taste the final ignominy of his capture. He is forced to bow down to the god of the Philistines and is then to be poisoned. But in a final desperate effort to vanquish the Philistines, Samson persuades the small child who is leading him to guide him to the pillars that support the temple. This being done he prays for new strength in order to accomplish his final deed of valour. Then, his prayer being granted, he overturns the pillars and the temple falls in ruins about the heads of the enemy Philistines, and thus are the Hebrews saved.

"THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO"

(MOZART)

THE action of this opera is the direct continuation of Rossini's "Barber of Seville." Rosina is now the Countess Almaviva; her husband, however, is not a pattern of virtue, but is seeking the love of Antonio's daughter, Barbarina. Figaro is engaged to Sussana, the Countess's maid, and discovers that his future wife is the object of his master, the Count's gallant attentions. He resolves to counter-plot against his lord, and Don Basilio, an obsequious instrument of his illicit designs. In Cherubino, my lord's page, who secretly entertains a boyish passion for his noble mistress, is found an apt, though unconscious assistant. The page, in disgrace for flirting with Sussana's cousin, approaches Sussana to secure the intercession of the Countess. During their interview the Count presents himself: Cherubino hides behind an armchair. The Count, ignorant that he is overheard, makes love to Sussana, but is interrupted by the arrival of Basilio, and unwilling to be found alone with the maid, seeks the same place of concealment as his page, who slips round and crouches into the seat, when Sussana covers him with a dress of her mistress. Basilio enters, and prying Sussana on behalf of his master, alludes to Cherubino's admiration of the Countess. At this, the Count bursts out in a towering rage. He declares he had found Cherubino concealed in her cousin's cottage, and as he illustrates this discovery, the Count lifts the dress on the chair and discloses the form of Cherubino.

This *coup de theatre* actually secures the forgiveness of the page, who, of course, has been eavesdropping, and this is awkward for the Count. Figaro has meanwhile appeared with a troop of girls, begging the Count to place a bridal wreath on Sussana's head. Cherubino, though forgiven, is dispatched on military service. This is laid the framework of the mesh of intrigue ending in the final discomforture of the Count's scheme of fresh infidelity to his lady and treachery towards his faithful servant, through the assumption by the Countess of a disguise, in which she keeps a rendezvous with the Count made by Sussana, who subsequently dressed as the Countess, receives in same trysting place the pretended declaration of Figaro's assumed advances to his mistress.

The Count's indignation causes an explosion, revealing the double masquerade, and the real culprit in the whole affair has to sue for pardon from his injured Countess, which is granted.

An underplot shows old Dr. Bartolo plotting with Marallina, the doctor's housekeeper, a personage who would mar Figaro's happiness by putting forward a previous promise to her. The discovery that Figaro is the offspring of Marallina and the Doctor, ends the plot with the tardy marriage of the old couple.



"LA GIOCONDA"

Opera in 4 Acts by Amilcare Ponchielli (1834-86).

Libretto by Arrigo Boito, based on Victor Hugo's play "Angelo, Tyrant of Padua."

First produced La Scala, Milan, April 8th, 1876.

Time: 17th century.

Place: Venice.

ACT I. Courtyard of the Ducal Palace on the afternoon of the Spring Regatta. Barnaba, a spy of the Inquisition, cynically watches the singing and dancing crowd. He loves Gioconda, the ballad singer, but she loves Enzo, a proscribed noble, now in Venice, disguised as a sea captain. Gioconda appears with la Cieca, her blind mother, to whom she is devoted. She repulses Barnaba. The crowd returns, acclaiming the victor of the regatta. Barnaba, out of spite,

suggests to Zuane, the defeated contestant, that la Cieca has encompassed his defeat by sorcery. She is seized by the crowd and defended by Enzo and his sailors. The riot is quelled by Alvisè, head of the Inquisition, who appears with his wife, Laura, masked. Barnaba sees the glances exchanged by Laura and Enzo and, already knowing of Laura's forced marriage to Alvisè and of a previous love, concludes that Laura and Enzo are still attached. Laura obtains from Alvisè the freedom of la Cieca, who gives a rosary to Laura. All enter the church except Barnaba and Enzo. The spy arranges to bring Laura that night to Enzo's ship, thus showing Gioconda Enzo's falseness. Barnaba dictates a letter to Isepo, informing Alvisè that his wife is about to elope with Enzo. He drops the letter in the Lion's Mouth, used for secret denunciations to the Inquisition. Gioconda and la Cieca, concealed, overhear the letter. Her mother tries to console her. The crowd returns singing and dancing "la Furlana."

Act II. Shows Enzo's ship moored at an island in the lagoon near Venice. The sailors sing a shanty. Barnaba, in a boat with Isepo, sings of his plot. From deck, Enzo sings of his love for Laura in the aria "Cièlo e mar." Barnaba brings Laura to Enzo. After their meeting, Enzo goes below and Laura implores, at a shrine to the Virgin, aid for their journey. Gioconda appears and confronts Laura in a duet of mutual defiance. She is about to stab Laura when a boat is seen approaching, bearing Alvisè and armed men. Laura raises la Cieca's rosary to implore help. Thus, Gioconda recognises the masked lady who saved her mother. She sends Laura away in her own boat. Barnaba, hoping to find Laura, finds Gioconda. He goes with Alvisè after Laura's boat. Enzo meets Gioconda, explanations following. Seeing galleys approaching to capture him, Enzo sets fire to his ship.

Act III. Alvisè's house. He sings of his vengeance on Laura. He calls her. A serenade is being sung outside; before that ends Laura must drink the swift poison handed to her by Alvisè and retire to a bier set up in the next room. Alvisè goes and Gioconda enters. She gives to Laura a narcotic, which, a la Friar Laurence, will create the semblance of death. Laura drinks it and enters the funeral chamber. Gioconda puts the poison in her own flask, leaving the empty vial on the table. The serenade over, Alvisè enters and believes he has been obeyed.

Alvisè entertains guests, presenting to them the "Dance of the Hours." Barnaba drags in la Cieca, who has been hiding in the house. She declares she has come to pray for the woman just dead. The death bell is heard. Enzo and Gioconda manage to enter. Barnaba reveals that the bell is for Laura. Alvisè shows the funeral chamber. Enzo attempts to stab Alvisè but is seized by guards.

Act IV. Gioconda's room. Friends of Gioconda bring in the unconscious Laura, whom they place behind a screen. Gioconda asks her friends to look for la Cieca whom she has not seen since the scene in Alvisè's house. Gioconda has promised to give herself to Barnaba, if he will help Enzo to escape from prison. She contemplates suicide and for a moment thinks of stabbing Laura. Enzo enters. Gioconda almost drives him to stab her by telling him he will not find Laura's body. She is saved from so ecstatic a death by Laura's voice calling on Enzo. Gioconda has prepared their flight. They thank her and the sight of la Cieca's rosary excites them to a trio of exaltation. Alone, Gioconda prepares to flee when Barnaba enters. Pretending to seek her jewels, she seizes her dagger and stabs herself to the heart. The furious Barnaba shouts that he has strangled her mother, but Gioconda does not hear. He rushes out.



"AIDA"

(VERDI)

AIDA, daughter of Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, and slave of the Princess Amneris, daughter of the King of Egypt, is beloved by Radames who, as the opera opens, has been selected by the King of Egypt to lead an attack on the

Ethiopians who are at the gates of the City. Radames is applauded by the people as he proceeds to battle.

The Princess Amneris, suspecting that Aida is in love with Radames, tells her that he is killed. Aida in her sorrow tells of her love for him. Amneris then tells Aida that she has lied and that Radames is alive, but says that Aida will never wed the man a Pharaoh's daughter loves.

Returning triumphant Radames is given the hand of the Princess by her father who also declares that he will grant whatever wish Radames desires to make. Radames asks for the release of the prisoners who are to be executed because Aida's father is among them. He does not know, however, that Aida's father is the king.

We find next Aida and Radames outside the temple where they meet in secret to say farewell. Aida's father, in hiding, has asked her to find the way Radames is to march on the Ethiopians. Aida asks him to fly with her and her father and he agrees, telling her that he will go the way the Army intends to take. The father appears, and Radames is furious at having been tricked into betraying his secret. At that moment Amneris, who was praying in the temple, overhears and hands Radames over to the guards.

Amneris, having vainly pleaded with him to give up Aida, Radames is tried and condemned to be buried alive under the temple, and in the final scene as we see the last stone being placed on his tomb, Radames is startled by a sound which he discovers is Aida. She has secretly hidden herself in the tomb so that she may share his death and be happy with him in the land which knows no sorrow.



“LA FAVORITA”

(DONIZETTI)

FERDINAND, a novice in a Monastery, falls in love with Leonora di Guzman, the mistress of Alfonso, King of Castile, although he neither knows her name or position. So deep is his passion that he decides to renounce his novitiate and seek her. This he tells to Balthazar, his superior, who releases him, saying that he will return again.

The scene changes to an Island where Leonora lives in splendour. She in her turn is deeply enamoured with Ferdinand, and, fearing that he may find out her position, does not disclose her name. She has Ferdinand brought to the island blindfolded by Inez whom he questions about Leonora, but to no avail. Inez and companions leave as Leonora enters. Leonora tells Ferdinand, without giving any reason, that their love can lead only to sorrow. He protests, and she hands him a parchment which she tells him will lead to a career of honour.

He still protests and at that moment Inez announces the arrival of the King, and Leonora leaves. Ferdinand is convinced that she is of noble rank. This is confirmed when he reads the scroll conferring on him a commission in the Army and, as he thinks, a way to claim the hand of the lady he loves.

The King prepares a fete in honour of Ferdinand's victory over the Moors. Unaware of the love that exists between Leonora and Ferdinand, he sings

of his love for her. But Leonora, while rejoicing in the honours destined to be Ferdinands, is filled with foreboding because of her relations with the King. The King intercepts Ferdinand's letter to Leonora and his anger is interrupted by confused sounds from without. Balthazar enters preceded by a priest bearing a scroll with the Papal Seal. He faces the King, Leonora, and the Court.

The Pope has sent a Bull to pronounce the interdict on the King if the latter refuses to dismiss his favourite at Court and restore his wife. The King wavers and is given time to consider.

The King informs his Ministers that he will give way to the Pope, summons Leonora, and orders Inez arrest. Ferdinand returns from the war which has saved the Kingdom and appears before the King, who desires to recompense him for his services. Leonora enters. Ferdinand, seeing her, asks for her in marriage. The King gives his consent with reluctance.

Leonora considers her future happiness and sends a letter by Inez informing Ferdinand of her true character. Inez is arrested and is therefore unable to deliver this.

The King decorates Ferdinand and creates him Count of Zamora, Leonora enters and finds Ferdinand ready to wed her. She believes he has received her letter and has forgiven her past.

The Nobles regard Ferdinand's elevation to Nobility as a reward for taking Leonora off the King's hands and refuse to associate with him.

Balthazar now comes to hear of the King's decision. Ferdinand, confused by the taunts of the nobles, hastens to greet him, but stops when he hears that he is to marry the King's mistress.

At this moment, as he hears the retort, the King enters leading Leonora. Ferdinand tears the chain from his neck and throws it at the King's feet.

Balthazar and the monks return, and with them Ferdinand. Leonora, disguised as a novice, comes upon the scene and tells of her unsuccessful effort to let him know her past and asks his forgiveness. All Ferdinand's former love returns, but it is too late; she dies in his arms.



"LA BOHEME"

(PUCCINI)

THE Bohemians are four artistes who live in the picturesque Quartier Latin of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century. They are Rudolph, the poet, Marcel, the painter, Colline, the philosopher, and Schaunard, the musician.

The first act of the opera opens in a bare attic where Marcel and Rudolph are huddled over a stove, trying to get warmth from a small fire they have made with Rudolph's manuscripts. They are soon joined by Colline and Schaunard, who are in a state of great jubilation, having acquired money and food. So with much merriment and laughter they settle down to a feast during which they make their landlord drunk so that he forgets about the rent that is owing to him.

After their meal they decide to go off to a nearby cafe, but as Rudolph has work to do, he promises to join them later. While he works he is interrupted by Mimi, a small flowerseller, whose candle has blown out on the

stairs. Rudolph relights the candle for her and then sees how very lovely and how frail she looks. In a scene of great tenderness and beauty he tries to warm her hands which are frozen, and they fall in love with each other.

They thus go off to join the others at the Cafe Momus. While they are celebrating at the cafe, Musetta, an old love of Marcel's, comes by with her latest conquest, an old love, Alcindoro. She does her best to make Marcel jealous, and then, sending Alcindoro off on a bogus message, she joins the artistes and they all flee, leaving the bill for Musetta's duped suitor to pay.

The next act is in the snow before a tavern at the toll gate, where Marcel is painting a tavern sign. Rudolph and Mimi have been having many quarrels, and most of them are due to Rudolph's hasty temper. Marcel upbraids Rudolph and tells him to be kinder to her, but Rudolph replies that he thinks he must leave Mimi because she is fatally ill and her strength is being sapped by their continual bickering. Unknown to him Mimi has overheard their conversation and betrays her presence by a fit of coughing; Rudolph is immediately stricken by remorse, and they become reconciled, but decide that they will separate for a time.

In the last act of the opera we are once again transported to the garret, where the friends are assembled, but they are a sadder little group than they were when the opera commenced. However, they keep up a pretence of their old gaiety and stage a burlesque feast. While their noise is at its loudest Musetta and Mimi arrive. Mimi has left her latest lover to come back to spend her last moments with her beloved Rudolph.

In the last two moments they have alone together the two tragic lovers try to recapture some of the early glamour and beauty of their love, and recall the time when Rudolph gently warmed Mimi's hand. Just when they seem at last to be living happily in the past, Mimi dies and leaves the sorrowing Rudolph to face the future alone.



“TANNHÄUSER”

Opera in 3 Acts. Music and libretto by Richard Wagner (1813-83).

First produced, Royal Opera, Dresden, October 19th, 1845.

Time: 13th century. Place: Thuringia, Germany.

ACT I, Scene I. Tannhauser, a minstrel knight (minnesinger) of the court of the Landgrave (earl) of Thuringia, has fallen victim to the wiles of Venus and dwells with her in the caverns of Venus Hill. But now, despite the visions conjured up by Venus, he longs to return to the world. Although he will always sing the praises of Venus, her pleadings are vain. His salvation, he says, rests in the Virgin Mary, at whose name Venus vanishes.

Scene 2. Tannhauser suddenly finds himself in a bright, sunlit valley before the Wartburg, the rock-castle of the Landgrave. A shepherd sings of Holda, goddess of Spring. A party of Elder Pilgrims, bound for Rome, passes. As their voices recede, Tannhauser continues their song. Now the Landgrave and his knights arrive, returning from the hunt. They welcome the long-absent Tannhauser, who evades their questions as to where he has been. At first he declines to stay, but when the knight Wolfram, with the Landgrave's permission, relates to Tannhauser that Elizabeth, the Landgrave's

neice, continues faithful to him, Tannhauser consents to stay. The Landgrave announces a song contest at his castle.

Act 2. Elizabeth, in great joy, apostrophizes the Singer's Hall, where Tannhauser is once again to sing. He is brought to her by Wolfram. They declare their mutual devotion. Thus, the generous Wolfram, also devoted to Elizabeth, sees his hope dispelled but feels no rancour. The Landgrave approves Tannhauser's suit and appoints Elizabeth judge of the song contest, whose theme is the nature of love. The guests and singers assemble. Wolfram, by lot, sings first, Tannhauser answers, Walther intervenes, then Biterholf. The argument loses its courtly nature. Tannhauser, carried off by his memories, horrifies the assembly by his reference to his experience of the sinful love of Venus. The ladies, except Elizabeth, leave. The knights draw their swords on the, at first, unrepentant Tannhauser, who is saved by Elizabeth. Her words put him to shame and he readily consents to the Landgrave's suggestion that, joining the Younger Pilgrims, about to set out for Rome, he go to seek pardon from the Pope. Elizabeth offers her life for Tannhauser's atonement.

Act 3. Again the valley of the Wartburg. Autumn; Elizabeth is praying before an image of the Virgin. She and Wolfram, apart, await the Pilgrim's return. The Elder Pilgrims pass. In vain Elizabeth seeks Tannhauser amongst them. She again prays, asking Mary to accept the sacrifice of her life. Gently declining Wolfram's offer to accompany her, she returns sadly to the castle. Wolfram, feeling Elizabeth is about to die, asks the Evening Star to light her on her way to heaven. Tannhauser, ragged and pale, enters. At first aggressive, he then relents and relates to Wolfram his pilgrimage. For his sin in dwelling in Venus' Hill, his damnation is as certain as that the Pope's staff will never bear leaves again—this was the Holy Father's judgment. In despair, he calls on Venus, who appears at an opening in the rocks. Wolfram's efforts to detain Tannhauser are successful only when he pronounces the name of Elizabeth. Chanting is heard from the back. Wolfram knows that Elizabeth has died. Her sacrifice puts Venus to flight. The Landgrave, his court and the Elder Pilgrims enter, bearing the body of Elizabeth. Tannhauser, calling on Elizabeth to pray for him, falls dead beside her. The Younger Pilgrims return, bearing the Pope's staff, which has miraculously put forth leaves. Thus is Tannhauser's sin expiated and forgiven.



“DON GIOVANNI”

Opera in 2 Acts by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791).

Libretto by da Ponte based on the Spanish play, “The Playboy of Seville and the Guest of Stone” of Tirso de Molina (1583-1648).

First produced at Prague, October 29th, 1787.

Time: 16th Century. Place: In and near Seville, Spain.

DON Giovanni, a dissolute noble, has gained access by night to the apartment of Donna Anna. Escaping, he is pursued by Anna's father, the Commandant.

who is killed by Don Giovanni in the ensuing fight. Don Giovanni runs off with his servant, Leporello. Anna and her fiance, Don Ottavio, swear to avenge her father's death.

Don Giovanni and Leporello meet Donna Elvira, an earlier victim, in search of her betrayer. Don Giovanni, at first not recognising her, attempts to flirt with her. Elvira reproaches him bitterly but he manages to get away, leaving Leporello to recount to her a catalogue of his master's conquests in many lands.

Don Giovanni next sees a peasant girl, Zerlina, about to marry Masetto, a young farmer. The latter is carried off by Leporello, whereupon Don Giovanni offers to substitute for Masetto. Zerlina, however, is saved by Elvira. Enter Anna and Ottavio, who actually enlist Don Giovanni's help to find the murderer of the Commandant. Anna, not recognising her aggressor, is saved from the danger of his gallantries by the arrival of Elvira, who denounces Don Giovanni. He, however, succeeds in persuading the others that Elvira is crazy. Later, Anna, by his voice recognises Don Giovanni as her father's murderer. She, Ottavio, and Elvira swear to punish the criminal.

Don Giovanni is informed by Leporello that Zerlina has returned to Masetto. Don Giovanni cynically invites the peasant wedding party to a reception at his house, when he again attempts to carry off Zerlina. Yet once more Zerlina is saved, this time by Elvira, Ottavio and Anna. Don Giovanni attempts to put the blame on Leporello, who has come to warn him of his danger from the avengers. Don Giovanni escapes.

Don Giovanni, still pursuing Zerlina, comes with Leporello to Elvira's house, where Zerlina is. The foolish Elvira, in response to his serenade, comes down to him; but Don Giovanni, meanwhile, changes costumes with Leporello, who receives Elvira. Don Giovanni frightens them off by assuming a rough voice, proceeding then to serenade Zerlina. Masetto arrives with friends. Don Giovanni pretends to be Leporello and to disapprove of his master's conduct. So Masetto sends his friends away and receives a beating from Don Giovanni, who flees. Zerlina comes to console Masetto.

Don Giovanni left behind, Elvira and Leporello, fleeing, find themselves in Anna's courtyard. Enter Anna and Ottavio. Leporello, still wearing his master's clothes, attempting to escape, is caught by the arriving Masetto, who drags him before Donna Anna. Leporello reveals his identity and, in the general surprise, escapes.

Don Giovanni meets the fleeing Leporello in a square and before the statue of the dead Commandant, Don Giovanni is recounting one of his adventures to Leporello, when the statue supernaturally speaks a warning. Don Giovanni forces the frightened Leporello to read the inscription on the statue: "I here await that vengeance decreed by Heaven unto the wretch who slew me." Don Giovanni is undismayed and forces Leporello to invite the statue to supper. The statue accepts.

Don Giovanni awaits his guest of stone. Supper is prepared, music is played in an adjoining room, Leporello announcing the items. Elvira comes to make one more attempt to win Don Giovanni to repentance. He mocks her. She goes but returns shrieking to escape by another door, having met the guest of stone. Knocking is heard. Leporello is terrified. Don Giovanni goes out and returns, retreating fearlessly before the advancing statue. The statue declines food, thrice calls on Don Giovanni to repent and on the latter's refusal, goes. Demons seize Don Giovanni and drag him to his doom.

Don Giovanni gone, the other principals enter to moralize upon his misdeeds and end.

“THE BARBER OF SEVILLE”

(ROSSINI)

COUNT ALMAVIVA, having fallen in love with Rosina, the ward of Dr. Bartolo, serenades her in his assumed character of Lindoro. He invites Figaro, barber and general go-between, to arrange a meeting between him and the lady, which is not an easy task owing to the vigilance of Bartolo, who wants to marry his ward himself. Bartolo's ally is Rosina's music master, Basilio. Figaro's efforts on behalf of his patron are thwarted more than once; but he ultimately gets the Count into the house disguised as a drunken soldier. His disguise is, however, discovered.

In the next scene, Almaviva contrives a more satisfactory interview by impersonating Basilio, and in that character giving Rosina a music-lesson. Figaro makes the necessary arrangements for Rosina to escape that evening, and marry Almaviva at his house. In spite of counter-plots by Bartolo and Basilio, Figaro's design succeeds, and the pair are happily married with Bartolo's blessing and consent.



“HANSEL AND GRETEL”

Fairy Opera in 3 Acts by Engelbert Humperdinck (1854-1921)

Libretto by Adelheid Wette, based on Grimms' tale

First produced, Weimar, Germany, December 23rd, 1893

ACT I. The home of Peter, the broom-maker and his wife, Gertrude. Hansel, their son, is making brooms; Gretel, their daughter, is knitting. Gertrude, entering, finds them fooling and, in her anger, upsets a jug of milk, their only supper. Gertrude sends the children to the forest to seek berries. Gertrude sleeps. She is awakened by the drunken, singing return of Peter, unexpectedly bringing food. Peter is sobered by the news that the children are in the woods, for a Witch lives near the enchanted rock, Ilsestein, who bakes children in her oven and devours them. Peter and Gertrude rush out to look for the children.

Act II. In the forest, near the Ilsestein. Hansel and Gretel eat the berries they have collected and amuse themselves until it is too dark to find their way home. Hansel comforts the weeping Gretel. The Sandman sprinkles sand in their eyes, they recite their prayer and fall asleep. Angels descend a heavenly ladder to protect them.

Act III. Dawn reveals in the background the Witch's house, made of sugarcake, an oven at one end and a cage at the other. The Dawn Fairy shakes dewdrops on the children. Gretel wakes and rouses Hansel. They see the house, and are breaking off a piece, when the Witch appears and captures them, casting a spell over them. When the Witch has her back turned, Gretel disenchant's Hansel with the Witch's juniper bough. The Witch orders Gretel to get into the oven. Gretel pretends to be stupid and asks the Witch to show her how to get in. The children push the Witch into the oven, which blows up, revealing a crowd of children, whom Gretel disenchant's. Peter and Gertrude appear. General rejoicing follows.

“THE BOHEMIAN GIRL”

Opera in 3 Acts by Michael William Balfe (1808-1870)

Libretto by Alfred Bunn, based indirectly on Cervantes' Tale,
“The Gypsy Girl,” (1615)

First Produced: Drury Lane, London, November 27th, 1843

Time: 19th Century; Place: Presburg, Austria

ACT I. Count Arnheim, Governor of Presburg, entertains guests for the chase, for which they leave with Arline, the Count's six-year-old daughter. Thaddeus, a Polish patriot, flying from Austrian soldiers, is aided by Devilshoof, chief of a roaming gypsy band, who disguises the fugitive as a gypsy. Florestein, the Count's nephew and a cowardly fop, announces in tenor that Arline is attacked by a stag; Thaddeus saves her, for which he is invited by the Count to assist at the ensuing feast. Thaddeus and Devilshoof refuse to drink to the Austrian Emperor. The Count saves Thaddeus from punishment for this act. Devilshoof, however, is arrested but escapes, kidnapping Arline.

Act II. Twelve years later. The gypsies' camp in Presburg. Led by Devilshoof, the gypsies rob Florestein of his jewelry, including a medallion. Arline relates to Thaddeus her dream of having lived in “marble halls.” Thaddeus explains the scar on Arline's arm, telling how he rescued her. They declare their love, overheard by the Gypsy Queen, who also loves Thaddeus. However, after the gypsy fashion, she unites them, but vows vengeance.

At the Fair, Florestein molests Arline. The Queen recognises Florestein as the owner of the medallion, which, in malice, she gives to Arline. Later, Florestein sees the medallion and has Arline arrested.

Arline is brought before Count Arnheim, who has just been thinking of his lost daughter. As he tries the charge of theft, he sees the scar on her arm. She relates the story told her by Thaddeus. The Count recognizes his daughter.

Act III. Count Arnheim's salon. Devilshoof arranges an interview between Thaddeus and Arline. On the approach of the Count's guests who have come to meet Arline, Thaddeus and Devilshoof hide. The Gypsy Queen enters and reveals the intruders' hiding-place. Thaddeus is ordered to leave, but Arline declares her love for him and her intention to follow him. Thaddeus relates his noble birth and career, Arline implores her father to consent. The Count finally agrees. The Gypsy Queen attempts the murder of Thaddeus but Devilshoof deflects the pistol and the Queen herself is killed.



“TALES OF HOFFMANN”

Opera in 3 Acts, with Prologue and Epilogue, by Jacques Offenbach (1819-80).

Libretto by Jules Barbier, based on “Fantastic Tales,” by
Wilhelm Amadeus Hoffman (1776-1822).

First Production, Opera Comique, Paris, February 10th, 1881.

Time: About 1800. Place: Nuremburg, Venice, Munich.

Prologue:—In Luther's wine cellar in Nuremburg. Forgetting his present love, Stella, an opera singer, Hoffman, amidst revelry, relates to his friends

the story of three of his loves, Olympia, Giulietta and Antonia, as shown in the three acts of the opera.

Act 1.—At Nuremburg, in the house of Spalanzani, inventor of the singing and dancing doll, Olympia, to hear whom guests are invited. Coppélius, who has supplied Olympia's eyes, has sold to Hoffman magic glasses which make inanimate objects live. Thus Hoffman falls in love with the doll. The mechanism of the doll goes out of order and Hoffman, dancing with her, is thrown down, breaking the magic glasses. Spalanzani has given Coppélius a worthless cheque for Olympia's eyes. Unpaid, Coppélius revenges himself by destroying the doll. Hoffman is jeered by the company.

Act 2.—Giulietta's palace in Venice. Despite the warnings of his friend Nicklaus, Hoffman loves Giulietta, who is really the slave of the magician, Dapertutto, for whom she has stolen the shadow of Schlemil, who loves her. Giulietta catches, for the magician, Hoffman's image in a magic mirror. A quarrel is easily brought about between Hoffman and Schlemil, the latter being killed. Thus Dapertutto obtains the dead man's soul. Giulietta and Dapertutto are seen in a gondola. Nicklaus persuades Hoffman to flee.

Act 3.—In Munich at the house of Councillor Crespel, whose daughter Antonia, Hoffman loves, Crespel disapproving. The deaf servant, Franz, mishears his instructions and instead of keeping Hoffman out, allows him to see Antonia. Crespel returns. Hoffman, concealed, overhears him talk with the sinister Doctor Miracle and so learns that Antonia is consumptive. Miracle hopes to make Antonia an early victim. Crespel and the doctor gone, Hoffman exacts from Antonia her promise to sing no more. He leaves and Miracle returns. He causes the portrait of Antonia's dead mother to command Antonia to sing. Antonia obeys. The effort kills her. Miracle disappears.

Epilogue.—Luther's wine cellar, some hours after the Prologue, at the conclusion of Hoffman's narrative.



“THE FLYING DUTCHMAN”

Opera in 3 Acts. Words and Music by Richard Wagner (1813-83)

First produced, Royal Opera, Dresden, January 2nd, 1843.

Time: 18th century.

Place: A Norwegian Seaport.

THE Legend. A Dutch sea-captain, attempting to round the Cape of Good Hope in a fierce gale, blasphemously swears he will do so, even if he must sail for ever. For this oath, he is condemned to do so, but may land once in every seven years to search for a woman who will love him unto death and so redeem him.

Act 1. The Harbour. The Dutchman's ship comes to land near that of Daland who lives nearby. Daland invites the mysterious captain to his house and gives him permission to pay his attentions to his daughter, Senta.

Act 2. Daland's house. Senta, her friends and her nurse, Mary, are spinning. Senta tells them the legend of the Flying Dutchman, whose portrait hangs in the room and for whom Senta has conceived a romantic love. Eric, a huntsman in love with Senta, comes to plead his cause, asking her to forget her foolish love for the portrait. She refuses and Eric goes. Daland brings in the Dutchman and Senta recognizing in him the original of the picture consents to marry him.

Act 3. The Harbour. The Dutchman's crew and Norwegian sailors with girls compete in chorus. Eric begs Senta not to sacrifice herself to the mysterious seaman but Senta insists. The Dutchman, overhearing them believes himself betrayed. He rushes to his ship and sails away. Senta tears herself from Mary and Eric and throws herself into the sea. Her sacrifice breaks the spell. The Dutchman's ship is seen sinking to rest in the waters.



“OTELLO”

Opera in 4 Acts by Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901).

Libretto by Eito, based on Shakespeare's play.

First produced, La Scala, Milan, February 5th, 1887.

Time: 15th century.

Place: Cyprus.

ACT I. A seaport in Cyprus. Otello, a noble Moor in the service of Venice, is governor of Cyprus. He is happily married to Desdemona, a Venetian lady, who is secretly loved by Rodrigo. Iago is jealous of Cassio's appointment as Otello's captain and determines to ruin Cassio and Otello, using his knowledge of Rodrigo's secret love and any other means.

The people watch Otello's ship battling against a storm to enter the port. The Moor lands safely, announcing his victory over the Turks. The storm dies, the people light a bonfire, Iago consoles Rodrigo for Otello's return and enlists his help to set Cassio drunk. Montano informs Cassio that it is his hour to go to the ramparts. A quarrel ensues in which Cassio wounds Montano. The furious Otello dismisses Cassio from his captaincy and orders Iago to clear the streets. Alone, Otello and Desdemona sing of their love.

Act II. A hall in the Castle, looking on to the garden. Iago persuades Cassio to appeal to Desdemona for her help to have his captaincy restored. Alone, Iago declares his creed of ruthless villainy. Cassio is seen by Otello and Iago speaking in the garden to Desdemona. By hints against Cassio, Iago begins to poison Otello's mind against his wife. Desdemona is seen receiving the homage of the townspeople. She enters to plead for Cassio, thus adding fury to the flame of Otello's jealousy. He angrily refuses her plea but pretends his head aches. She offers him her handkerchief, Otello's first gift to her. He throws it down. It is picked up by Emilia, Iago's wife and maid to Desdemona. Iago forces Emilia to give him the handkerchief, while Desdemona asks Otello's pardon for having angered him. Otello sends the two ladies away. Otello demands from Iago proof of his insinuations. Iago, lying, tells of having heard Cassio, in his slumber, speak of Desdemona's love for him. Also, he tells Otello that he has seen Desdemona's handkerchief with Cassio. Otello bids farewell to peace, swears vengeance, Iago swearing to support him.

Act III. The Great Hall of the Castle. The arrival of Ambassadors from Venice is announced. Iago arranges with Otello to bring Cassio to the Castle. Desdemona again pleads for Cassio, Otello demands the handkerchief, again pleading headache, he calls her unchaste without naming Cassio and pushes her from the room. Iago bids Otello hide while he speaks with Cassio. Otello hears only a part of the conversation, which really refers to another woman and so believes that Cassio is speaking of his love for Desdemona. Iago has placed the handkerchief in Cassio's lodging and now has him produce it. Cassio gone, Otello decides to kill Desdemona, suggesting poison which he rejects in favour of suffocation, proposed by Iago, who promises to deal with Cassio.

Enter Lodovico, Venetian envoy and full company. Otello, whilst reading documents brought by Lodovico, publicly insults Desdemona. He sends for

Cassio, who, he announces, is to succeed him as governor of Cyprus. Deaf to Lodovico's plea to console the sobbing Desdemona, Otello pushes her to the ground. When all voice their horror, Otello, cursing his wife, bids them fly. He swoons with rage, whilst the people in the streets, unaware of events in the Castle sing of the Lion of Venice and of Otello's valour. Iago, placing his foot on the fallen Moor, cried, "Behold the Lion of Venice."

Act IV. Desdemona's bedchamber. She prepares for bed, aided by Emilia, to whom she expresses her presentiment of evil in the sad Willow Song. Emilia goes, Desdemona sings the Ave Maria and gets into bed. Otello enters by a secret door, contemplates Desdemona, kissing her thrice. She awakes, he asks her has she prayed, tells her to prepare for death, accuses her of being Cassio's lover and suffocates her. Emilia compels Otello to open the door—she has come to announce that Cassio has killed Rodrigo (in a duel instigated by Iago). A moan from the dying Desdemona is heard. She tells Emilia that she has harmed herself and dies. Then Otello confesses to Emilia that he has killed Desdemona. Emilia shouts for help. Lodovico, Cassio and others enter. All Iago's plot is uncovered. Otello bids farewell to his dead wife and, suddenly snatching out a dagger, ends his life.



“ ROMEO AND JULIET ”

Opera in 5 Acts by Charles Gounod (1818-1893).

Libretto by Barbier and Carré after Shakespeare.

First production, Lyric Theatre, Paris, April 27th, 1867.

Time: 14th century.

Place: Verona.

Prologue:—The Chorus summarizes the story.

Act I.—A ball at Count Capulet's palace. His nephew, Tybalt, speaks to Paris of the latter's fiancée, Juliet, Capulet's daughter. Juliet enters with her father. Despite the Capulet-Montague feud, Romeo, Montague and his friends, masked, come to the ball. Mercutio, friend of Romeo, sings of Queen Mab, the fairies' midwife. The Montague's withdraw. Juliet sings her waltz song. Romeo, returning alone, sees her. He unmask. Their love is instantaneous. Tybalt returns and recognizes Romeo, informing Juliet that Romeo is an enemy of her house. Tybalt wishes to attack the Montagues but Capulet, observing the law of hospitality, prevents him.

Act 2.—Capulet's garden. Romeo eludes his friends, who have discovered his love. From her balcony, Juliet sings of her love for Romeo. He goes to her and they exchange vows. Gregory and other Capulet servants, having seen Romeo's page, Stephano, suspect an intrusion but fail to find Romeo. Juliet goes in to her nurse, Gertrude, who calls her. She reappears to take leave of Romeo. They decide to marry secretly.

Act 3.—Scene I. Friar Laurence's cell. Hoping to end the Capulet-Montague feud, the Friar marries Romeo and Juliet. Juliet's nurse approves.

Scene 2. The street outside Capulet's palace. Romeo is within, visiting Juliet. Stephano, fearing that Romeo cannot get out, sings a song to draw off the Capulet servants. Gregory and Stephano fight. Montagues and Capulets arrive. Tybalt slays Mercutio, Romeo slays Tybalt. The Duke banishes Romeo.

Act 4.—Juliet's room. Romeo, going to exile, bids her farewell. The nurse announces the visit of Capulet and Friar Laurence. At the point of death, Tybalt has urged Capulet to hurry the marriage of Paris and Juliet. The Friar and the nurse do not dare to reveal Juliet's marriage. Juliet's father leaves the Friar to instruct Juliet on her wedding to Paris. Instead, to enable him to send word to Romeo, he gives her a potion, whose effect is that she shall appear as dead for many hours.

Act 5.—Friar Laurence's message to Romeo has not reached him. Instead Romeo has heard that Juliet is dead and is lying in state in the Capulet tomb. He comes to see her and takes poison. Juliet awakens from the philtre, and, not yet knowing that Romeo has taken poison, is charmed to see him. The poison takes effect, Romeo dies, Juliet stabs herself with his dagger.

—Specially written by John E. Doyle.

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